

Titanic 'intact and upright,' looks 'like a museum piece'

BOSTON (AP) — The sunken Titanic remarkably is intact with a hull "like a museum piece," but any salvage attempts would desecrate the gravesite of the more than 1,500 people who died with it, the first man to view the wreckage said Tuesday.

Robert Ballard, chief scientist of the joint U.S.-French venture that found the oceanliner Sunday described to associates in Massachusetts the remote-control television survey he made of the 73-year-old wreck.

"The ship was pretty intact and upright," said Nancy Green, a public relations assistant at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute.

Shelley Lauzon, public relations director at Woods Hole, spoke with Ballard in a ship-to-shore telephone call to the Navy research vessel Knorr.

The Titanic was the biggest, the most luxurious and supposedly the safest liner of its time. Its builders had called it unsinkable because of its double steel hull and waterproof compartments.

But an iceberg cut a 300-foot gash across several of the compartments and the ship sank on the night of April 14-15, 1912. Just over 700 people managed to get to lifeboats and were



Robert Ballard

saved, but 1,513 others died.

The Knorr arrived last Wednesday at the Titanic sinking site 500 miles off Newfoundland, where the scientists had spent a month in June and had come close to finding the vessel, Ms. Lauzon said.

The group was testing Ballard's new unmanned underwater vehicle, called the Argo. He developed it in a joint U.S.-French underwater expedition program funded by the U.S. Navy.

The Argo's camera showed the

first pieces of a boiler from Titanic early Sunday morning, Ms. Lauzon said. Then the ship itself was found at about 13,000 feet.

The Titanic was believed to have carried a fortune in passengers' jewels and other valuables in the purser's safe. But Ballard told Ms. Lauzon any attempt to salvage the wreck would be "ridiculous," and instead proposed making it a marine memorial.

"We're grateful he felt that way," said Edward Kamuda, general secretary of the Titanic Historical Society. "It's a gravestone for the 1,500 people who died."

Ms. Lauzon said retrieving valuables would be nearly impossible.

"It's at a tremendous depth, and we wouldn't want to endanger the lives of people. It would have to be done with remotely operated vehicles, and we have no plans do that," she said.

As for ownership of the wreck, anyone who salvages valuables from an underwater shipwreck can file a claim in admiralty court. The court will protect the claim while it determines whether to allow the claimant to keep the valuables, a portion of the valuables or expenses in salvaging.